

# **Cal Anderson Park/ Lincoln Reservoir Phase 4**

## **Schematic Design Narrative**

### **4.04**



**The Berger Partnership PS**  
Landscape Architecture

#### **Project Background:**

This Seattle Historic Landmark site, originally designed by the Olmsted Brothers in 1904 and formerly known as Lincoln Reservoir, was officially renamed in a dedication ceremony in 2003 to honor the late Washington State Legislator and community advocate Cal Anderson.

Currently, the site is undergoing a major construction project managed by Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) to replace the existing open-air reservoir with underground reservoir vaults. At the completion of this phase of construction, the amount of usable open space in Cal Anderson Park will be approximately four (4) acres larger than when the open-water reservoir dominated the site. Prior to beginning reservoir replacement, SPU funded a master planning process to involve the community and develop a master plan for the proposed new park. That process culminated in a document and graphic known as the June 2002 Lincoln Reservoir Park Site Master Plan.

The Park Site Master Plan honors and preserves the historic legacy of the site by acknowledging the Olmsted design, yet reinterprets a portion of the elements for the next 100 years. Historic elements of the Olmsted plan have been preserved and reinforced where appropriate, historic architecture is given new priority, and original design elements are recalled throughout the park. As a result of review and endorsement of the Park Site Master Plan by the Landmarks Preservation Board and Seattle Design Commission, a definitive vision for the park has been achieved. It is not a historic preservation, but rather an adaptive re-use of the site. It is a vision that acknowledges and honors the historic legacy yet successfully melds it with present program needs, and has served as a framework for future implementation.

The fourth phase of implementation at this site, undertaken by Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, is intended to complete design and construct the remaining high-priority items originally identified in the widely endorsed Park Site Master Plan. The project scope includes a replacement of the temporary play area with a new Children's Play Area adjacent to the new Grand Lawn Area of the park, conversion of the temporary play area to a new basketball court, and enhancement at the four (4) park corner entries (including walls, lighting, planting, and irrigation). Schematic Design for these elements has been completed and each is described herein. Several other items such as site furniture, wayfinding, and planting will be studied and implemented as budget allows.

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#### Children's Play Area:

Consistent with the Park Site Master Plan, the proposed Children's Play Area is located in what was formally the southeast corner of the open water reservoir. The play area is situated to provide a great visual connection to and from most areas of the park. On the south and east sides of the play area, a portion of the functional yet decorative concrete parapet wall that previously formed the reservoir edge has been retained to serve as a symbolic remnant of the historic reservoir form. Since the open water is now underground, the parapet wall is free-standing, with pedestrian access on all sides, and creates a substantial and unique edge to the play area.

To create a special place for children and provide a sense of entry and security, the parapet wall remains unbroken, but at each end of the wall is a major entry into the play area. To further define those points of entry, an overhead metal art piece could whimsically recall the history and function of the reservoir and create a welcoming portal.

To meet the design program of providing a variety of play experiences for children ranging in age from 2-12 years, the play area is split into two levels. Each level will provide ADA accessibility from the loop path immediately adjacent and via a set of steps between the two levels. The combination of wide stair in the center and ADA path around the edge allows users to completely loop and access all features of the play area. ADA accessible, resilient, play surfacing tiles will be located in all fall zones. The grade change and resultant low retaining wall between the two levels creates a unique opportunity to integrate a seat-wall and child-sized outdoor 'rooms' edged by visually and educationally stimulating planting.

Metal valve operators that were salvaged from the historic Gatehouse adjacent to the play area are slated to be sandblasted, re-painted for re-use, and incorporated into the play area. The schematic plans indicate one (1) centered in each of the outdoor 'rooms'.

In order to provide an adequate amount of space to meet the required design program, a portion of the play area must extend over the top of one of the subterranean reservoir vaults. The schematic design indicates that the swings will be located in the upper portion of the play area, over the reservoir, but it presents a unique challenge to achieve the required anchoring. This particular condition is currently being reviewed by the swing manufacturer and structural engineers, but it is possible that a program shift may need to occur as the design progresses.

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#### **Park Entry Improvements –General:**

The new entry improvements are designed to provide welcoming, secure and interesting initial experiences to the park. By using a similar vocabulary of materials (stone, lighting, planting, etc.) each park entry reinforces continuity with the others, yet is configured in a different way to respond to the uniqueness of the adjacent condition and to aid park users with wayfinding.

#### **Northwest Park Entry (Nagle & Denny):**

This corner of the park will be highly used given the fact that it is the closest primary connection to the popular Broadway Business District. The northwest entry is particularly unique due to the presence of several large, mature, deciduous trees flanking the pathway, one of which is a *Styphnolobium japonicum* or Chinese Scholar Tree. This tree, which flowers heavily every other year in late summer, has been dedicated a Landmark Heritage Tree, which means “it is the largest and among the oldest of its kind known in Washington State” and we are honored to have it marking the northwest corner of the park.

Given the presence of these mature trees, care was taken to minimize disruption within the root zones. Proposed, curved stone entry walls are located beyond the root zones and define the interface between the lawn and the community gardens that are located beneath the trees on either side of the path. A sign commemorating the Chinese Scholar Tree will also be tastefully integrated into the wall, and wall-mounted globe lights will be located on the integral stone plinths flanking the main path.

#### **Northeast Park Entry (Denny & 11<sup>th</sup>):**

The northeast entry is similar in many ways to the northwest entry in terms of approach into the park, however it has a much more open feeling given the absence of towering deciduous trees. That said, there are smaller specimen conifers grouped within community gardens that are slated to remain. The design proposes a modest expansion and improved definition of the existing community garden space. Given this entry's proximity to the adjacent residential neighborhood, the configuration of the entry walls creates a small entry plaza with space for seating along one of the curved stone entry walls. The segment of straight wall bordering the north sidewalk has been held back from the edge slightly to provide enough room for seasonal planting. By intentionally putting planting at the base of the wall, it discourages seating and therefore reduces the 'gauntlet-effect' that can be created when seat-walls parallel the direction of pedestrian circulation.

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#### **Southeast Park Entry (11th & Olive):**

In addition to serving as the park's official address, this entry is the primary access point for police vehicles and for Park's Department vehicular access to Bobby Morris Playfield and the Shelter House. As a result, the design proposes a symmetrical pair of entry walls on either side of the path that creates opportunities for seating and small gathering. The segment of straight wall that borders the north sidewalk has been held back from edge slightly to provide enough room for seasonal planting. This preferred configuration necessitates removal of one existing conifer just south of the entry, but is expected to allow additional sunlight into the area in the afternoon.

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The design also proposes extending into the right-of-way in this area to create a curb bulb (this is shown as an alternate since it is an idea we're investigating, but the feasibility is dependent on the results of budget, code, and permit requirements). Since 11<sup>th</sup> Ave East is very wide at this point and the street area is not used for parking, adding a curb bulb would greatly increase the amount of space dedicated for the pedestrian entry plaza, provide a safer pedestrian street crossing experience, and allow authorized vehicles to completely pull off the street and park temporarily without having to enter the park. The curb alternate would also allow the addition of two street trees and planting within the plaza space. These coupled with the stone entry walls and wall-mounted globe lights will provide a greatly enhanced experience to this major park entry.

#### **Basketball Court (Nagle & Olive):**

This area of the park is geared toward active recreation and this particular site was formally a tennis court and temporary play area. The schematic design proposes using the same surface (re-painted) but reducing the amount of asphalt since the area required for basketball is smaller than the adjacent tennis courts. It is expected that the existing chain link fencing could remain in place on the south and west sides of the court, but be removed on the north and east sides to increase visibility and security by reducing a potential 'gauntlet-effect'. However, to help define the court area from the adjacent pedestrian path to the east, a seat-wall is proposed. This will provide spatial definition without sacrificing visibility and will provide a place for players and spectators.

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#### **Southwest Park Entry (Nagle & 11<sup>th</sup>):**

The southwest entry is unique because it is home to a modest pump-house building that has an active role in the reservoir's operation. A design challenge was to provide a welcoming pedestrian experience yet accommodate Seattle Public Utility vehicles on a daily basis. By installing a basketball court immediately south of the entry in place of the former tennis court, the amount of asphalt and fencing is greatly reduced. This reduction has a direct, positive impact on the southwest entry by increasing the amount usable space dedicated for pedestrians.

Of all the entries, this one is the most urban in character and requires the largest amount of hardscape, but this is appropriate for the use patterns expected. Evocative of parks throughout Europe, a grid of trees with crushed rock surfacing beneath is proposed south of Olive and north of the basketball court providing opportunities for informal circulation and seating. The design at the street includes a large-radius stone entry wall surrounded by hardscape or crushed rock which allows it to act as a seat-wall, thus creating a welcoming, pedestrian-oriented entry plaza. Another major benefit is that this expanded entry plaza now directly relates to the series of ramps, stairs, and planting that accesses Seattle Central Community College, immediately west of Nagle Place.

#### **Summary:**

While each area of the site is unique and has a different set of design considerations, the final implementation of these high-priority Park Site Master Plan items, will finally establish the park as a unified whole. The configuration and materials chosen for each area respect the historic legacy of the park, yet respond to current and future needs and contribute to a new chapter in this Seattle Historic Site, beginning with the grand opening of the new Cal Anderson Park.

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